

The United States must lead if there is any hope of restoring stability to the region. The President's silence is unacceptable. In the midst of this crisis, his silence is intolerable. He is AWOL.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.J. RES. 88, MARRIAGE PROTECTION AMENDMENT

Mr. GINGREY, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109-573) on the resolution (H. Res. 918) providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 88) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relating to marriage, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

PROTECTING FLORIDA'S MANATEE POPULATION

(Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the bill H.R. 4075, the Marine Mammals Protection Act, legislation that protects a true wonder of nature, the Florida manatee.

Living in Florida's streams, swamps, and rivers, manatees are beloved throughout my district and especially in Citrus County.

The Marine Mammals Protection Act provides new and increased protections for the manatees from fishermen and from wildlife loss.

Chairman RICHARD POMBO deserves credit for bringing this bill up for a vote and helping to protect one of Florida's most precious natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation will provide grants and protections to help ensure that Florida's sea cows will be around for my grandchildren, my great grandchildren, and everyone to enjoy years into the future.

There actually is a preserve in my area where the manatees, once they are injured, can go for treatment, and it is a wonderful, wonderful resource. Thankfully, the manatee has come back from being endangered.

THE U.S. RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, when you are home in your district, there are those who are looking at the crisis in the Middle East and asking what is the response of the United States. And, yes, of course Israel has the right to defend. But the President of the United States, the Executive, has the right as well to stand and call boldly for a cease fire.

We are the superpower of the world. We do have Americans in harm's way. I myself have students in the Mickey Leland internship program who are making their way back home from Israel.

What I would say is that this is a time for engagement. This is a time for drawing parties from the Arab states as well as Israel and others who would go into the Mideast, sit down in Jordan or other states that are surrounding the area, and actually have a confrontation, a meeting, an understanding, if you will, to bring some solution.

It is important for us to be in the way of saving lives. It is important for us to acknowledge the necessity of finding balance so that we can save lives.

Soldiers should be returned, but we should not ignore the opportunity for engagement. We must be in the Mideast. We must draw the parties together. We must find a solution. We must save lives.

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SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOUSTANY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

BLAZING GUNS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, news from the second front: The border war continues. It sounds like a scene from Lonesome Dove or some other western movie. Hundreds of shots were ringing out over the Rio Grande River, piercing the night for a period of minutes. But movie villains, this was not. These are real outlaws that are shrouded in darkness and shooting at Americans, just like in the old days.

The gunfire belongs to the border, the U.S.-Mexican border. Just last week, in the moonlight, was a scene of machine gun madness. It could have been a fatal barrage of bullets.

Last Wednesday night, Border Patrol and Hidalgo County, Texas, sheriff's deputies patrolling the Rio Grande River, the international border between Mexico and the United States, stumbled upon two boys from Mexico that were running from outlaws on the Mexican side. They had just raided their ranch and kidnapped their father and killed a ranch hand, so they were fleeing these criminals.

They were swimming to the safety of the United States. They were hiding in the cornfields of Mexico for several hours while machine gun carrying killers were looking for them.

But violence did not end on the Mexican side of the river where it started.

The victims swam across the river to their escape into the hands of U.S. law enforcement officers. Seconds after stumbling on the boys, law enforcement officers on the border and sheriff's deputies were engulfed in a barrage of bullets.

The bad guys on the Mexican side of the border, these thugs who were lying in wait, would wait no more, and they decided to fire on American peace officers from their side of the river. As many as 10 men with machine guns turned their guns to fire 200 to 300 rounds of ammunition at law enforcement officers on the American side of the river.

Luckily, the Americans had built a levee on the American side, just like a fortress, and they were protected from these kidnappers who would shoot their automatic weapons as if they were on the Israeli-Lebanon border. Their bullets ricocheted off this dirt wall. The deputies dove behind it, but they never returned fire to the Mexican side.

This gang-style rural warfare you hear about on battlefields is in our own American backyard. In just the last year and a half, this is the fifth time Border Patrol has been shot at.

Former Texas Ranger Doyle Holdridge put it best. He said, "After dark on the Texas-Mexican border, it gets western."

You won't even normally find Hidalgo County deputies in that area of the border. Their sheriff doesn't allow them to go there. He said it is too dangerous to patrol that portion of the river. Instead, the sheriff only reacts to calls for help, spending the rest of the time trying to make their presence known in neighborhoods that are in fear living on the border.

Sheriff Lupe Trevino says the Federal Government has left the gate wide open, allowing thugs, plain criminals, to do damage on the American side of the border. He says drastic cuts have washed away homeland security funding and drained funds from community policing from this border area in South Texas.

Sheriff Trevino says a lack of enforcement, lack of funding and lack of Federal support has left local authorities to stand by, while guerillas fire machine guns at them, invaders take over their neighborhoods and leave local law enforcement in harm's way while on border patrol.

Mr. Speaker, this shootout of 200 to 300 rounds barely made the news last week. We hear all about the border shootings on the Israeli-Lebanon border, but, Mr. Speaker, our government should be as concerned about the gunfire on our border as we are about blazing guns in the Middle East.

And that's just the way it is.

IN SUPPORT OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO SELF-DEFENSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.